



**August 17, 2020**

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## Training Opportunity

### *Virtual Learning - S-203 PIO Course Opportunity*

- ◆ The Big Rivers Forest Fire Compact will be offering the S-203 course virtually October 19-23, 2020. As of August 13 there are five open slots, after which they will start a waiting list.
- ◆ *S203 Introduction to Incident Information* - (three hours prework; 30 hours virtual classroom): The purpose of this course is to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to serve as Public Information Officers.
- ◆ If you're interested and have confirmed that it is acceptable with your immediate supervisor, contact [Fred Turck](#) for more information.

## News You Can Use

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### *COVIDWISE App*

- ◆ Last week, everyone received an email from the Governor's office regarding the latest tool the Commonwealth has developed to combat the novel coronavirus that continues to plague the world. With the release of the COVIDWISE app, Virginia became the first state in the nation to implement a free COVID-19 exposure notification app. Developed by a partnership of the Virginia Department of Health, Google, and Apple, COVIDWISE allows users to anonymously notify others if they test positive for COVID-19, notifies users if they have likely been exposed to the virus based on positive reports from other app users, and provides guidance on how to protect yourself and others. No location data or personal information is ever collected, stored, or transmitted via the app, and it is 100 percent voluntary to download and use.
- ◆ VDOF encourages all our staff to download and use the app to join in the fight to stop the spread of COVID-19. To download the COVIDWISE app, simply go to the App Store or Google Play Store, search for COVIDWISE, and hit download.

### *Fall 2020 - Fire Refresher and Fitness Testing Procedures:*

- ◆ In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a number of key modifications have been made to the VDOF's requirements for fall fire refresher and Work Capacity Test (WCT). The revised standards will be in effect for the fall and winter of 2020, for all agency responders who must complete these requirements for the 2021 calendar year. In order to limit the number of folks who have to test and reduce the number at any given test site, these changes will be made:
  - All refresher training will be conducted virtually.
  - Everyone who completed the WCT last year will be recertified at the same level (light, moderate, arduous) for the upcoming year without retaking the WCT. These folks will also not be retested on shelter deployment.
  - In-person testing will be limited to new employees and part-time firefighters and limited to one instructor and two participants per site. All personnel will complete a health assessment prior to testing.
  - Shelters and pack vests will be sanitized between uses.
- ◆ The standards document is located within the Wildfire and Forest Protection section of the VDOF website and can be accessed through this direct link:  
<https://www.dof.virginia.gov/fire/2020%20Work%20Capacity%20Test%20and%20RT-130%20guidelines.pdf>

### *Certified Prescribed Burn Manager's class – September 2020 – Cancelled*

- ◆ Based on the ongoing social distancing challenges around the COVID-19 pandemic, the Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Managers Course, scheduled for September 23-24, has been cancelled. Fire and Emergency Response Branch staff are developing a virtual course and hope to have that available by early Spring, 2021.

## Items of Note

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- ◆ [Cross-laminated Timber \(CLT\) Made from Hardwood is Gaining Traction](#)
- ◆ [How to Bend Wood](#)
- ◆ [GreenTrees Becomes World's 11th Largest Forestry Project](#)
- ◆ [Massive wood slabs market to eclipse \\$2 billion by 2030](#)

## Last Week:

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### *Human Resources*

- ◆ On July 28, Kristi Clore (talent management coordinator) and Hector Rivera (director of human resources) created and built our first "virtual hiring booth" and represented VDOF in the first Statewide Virtual Hiring Event sponsored by the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and the Virginia Career Works Centers.
- ◆ Like many organizations, the Commonwealth of Virginia must adapt swiftly to new practices to attract the right talent to its workforce amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, as part of our way forward approach, VDOF teamed with VEC in a Statewide Virtual Hiring Event with the shared goal of helping Virginians get back to work. The event was a success, with more than 5,100 job seekers registered, of which 633 directly visited our VDOF virtual hiring booth. Additionally, Hector was available in real-time and directly engaged with 24 candidates, yielding eight potential leads for future opportunities.
- ◆ VDOF seeks to be a leader in virtual hiring forums and will increase participation in similar events to expand the VDOF brand to entice the best talent to join our team -- we are optimistic about what the future holds!

### *Forestland Conservation*

- ◆ Charlie Becker (marketing & utilization program manager) met with Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management), Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator) and Jennifer Leach (conservation, markets and public programs coordinator) to discuss the Forest Products Tax program and to setup how handling, processing and analysis of data will be handled moving forward.
- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager) and Eli Podyma (community forester) demonstrated ash treatment techniques for Richmond Parks and Recreation staff in Byrd Park.

### *Agency Lands*

- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) participated in the first two of eight planned virtual meetings of the Forest Productivity Research Cooperative. Rather than a week of day-long sessions, the co-op leaders are conducting one-to two-hour "lunch and learn sessions" on Tuesdays and Thursdays in August. The first two topics were 1) a business meeting and overview of current study status and co-op operations (which have been severely constrained thus far in 2020) and 2) a review of version 2.0 of the forestry-focused productivity web tool the co-op has developed during the last three years. This tool translates traditional web soil series and information from across the Southeast into more forestry-related recommendations. Currently the map units address operability and productivity ratings, and in the next iteration the plan is to add a layer to recommend best

silvicultural options (species, establishment methods, thinning regimes, etc.) specific to each soil map unit.

- ◆ Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) oversaw the white pine cone collection efforts at Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest which began on July 29 and concluded on August 9. A total of 1,160 bushels of cones were collected and will be transported to Southern Seed Company in Homer, Georgia, where the seed will be extracted and processed.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center (AFC) had storm damage from storms on Friday August 7. Orchard trees were snapped off and/or uprooted in the white pine, Virginia pine and sawtooth oak seed orchards. Also, the shop lost some shingles.
- ◆ Joshua McLaughlin did a seminar/tour for Virginia Tech's VALOR (Virginia Agriculture Leaders Obtaining Results) program. McLaughlin gave a basic tour of the nursery and the group had a discussion about the future of the agriculture and forestry in Virginia. The group had a total of 26 people (16 of them being fellows in the fourth class of the VALOR's program).
- ◆ Shannon Lewis (forest management forester) completed a summary of State Forest history, features, management and income and submitted it to the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors. They asked for a written presentation this year. Tammy Ingle (administrative staff assistant) had the county check delivered to the county administrator's office in the amount of \$60,323.12.
- ◆ Dennis Gaston (state forests forester) and Ben Duke (state forest technician), with help from Eastern Region staff, completed 162 acres of site preparation burns on Dragon Run (88 acres), Big Woods (41 acres) and Sandy Point (33 acres) State Forests.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) planted approximately three acres of wildlife food plots on the Matthews State Forest with seed donated by the National Wild Turkey Federation.
- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist) gave Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) a tour of the Appomattox-Buckingham and Prince Edward Gallion State Forests to look at various timber stands and some historical areas and to have a general discussion on management of those state forests.
- ◆ Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester) and Matt Wolanski (senior area forester) are looking to treat about seven acres of invasive species on the Paul State Forest using \$1,950.00 left from a forest health grant. The area was grazed earlier this summer by goats in order to control invasives, including Japanese stiltgrass, multiflora rose, and *Ailanthus*. Matt is currently looking for a contractor to do the spray work using backpack sprayers. Ed Stoots has provided a contract template to be used.
- ◆ The State Forest system will undergo their annual Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)/Tree Farm Certification Audit on September 8 through Field audit inspections this year will focus on Dragon Run, Cumberland, Crawfords, Sandy Point, Chilton Woods and Zoar State Forests.

## State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Ed Stoots met with Chuck Wright (area forester) and Matthew Hutchins (forest technician) on the College of William & Mary – Ash Lawn Property to introduce Chuck and Matthew to Sara (property manager) and start working on a timber sale project located on the property. Approximately 20 acres of older loblolly pine stands will be clear-cut on the property and reforested. A three-acre patch of kudzu within parts of the pine stand was examined for treatment this summer. Chuck and Matthew also examined the hardwood area for the possibility of salvaging ash; they reached a decision that the risk versus the reward favored not salvaging the ash, which was not as widespread as they first thought.

- ◆ Ed Stoots, Chuck Wright and Matthew Hutchins also looked at the adjoining Foundation property which will be thinned under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and is not a part of the State-Owned Lands Program.
- ◆ Heather Dowling (senior area forester) and Jerre Creighton recently met with staff on the Richard Bland College property in Dinwiddie County to discuss past management work, potential research projects being considered by some staff on parts of the property, and signage to identify collaboration and education for the public. Potential research would be used for lab studies on herbs, animals and tree density with some possible areas planted to shortleaf pine or left to come back in hardwood.

### Central Region

- ◆ Kinner Ingram (urban & community forestry specialist) participated as a panelist at the 2020 Prince William County Schools Sustainability Summit. The purpose of this annual summit is to collaborate with teachers and professionals in the environmental sector to gather sustainability-related content and education support for in-school activities and classroom supplemental lessons. The theme for this year's summit was Focus on the Future: Resilience through the Lens of Sustainability.
- ◆ Patrick Murphy (senior area forester) met with Deya Ramsden (Middle James River buffer coordinator) to make site visits to five upcoming Middle James River Buffer planting projects. These tracts were across Buckingham and Cumberland Counties, ranging in size from three acres to 96 acres. They will be planted with either loblolly pine or a mix of site-specific hardwoods in spring 2021.
- ◆ Matt Wolanski participated in the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) course in Charlottesville. Matt says, "The training was incredibly valuable. It seems like urban forestry and traditional forestry are two distinct fields, but a lot can be learned from one concentration and applied to the other. This training will certainly make me a more knowledgeable forester and a better communicator of tree health, both on an individual tree basis and in the broader forest landscape. The opportunity to take this course is much appreciated!"

### Western Region

- ◆ Domtar has announced the closing of its uncoated freesheet manufacturing plant in Kingsport, TN. The shutdown will result in the layoff of 300 people. This will have a significant negative impact on the pulpwood market in far Southwest Virginia. In addition to purchasing chips from many Virginia producers, Domtar also burned most of the sawmill waste in the area. Domtar's future plans are to repurpose assets at this mill and convert it to the manufacture of linerboard in 2023. This will result in the re-hiring of 160 employees. Local news coverage can be seen at the two links below:
  - [Domtar repurposing Kingsport mill, transition expected to be complete by 2023](#)
  - [Following layoffs, Domtar Kingsport Mill closing, to be converted and reopen in 2023](#)
- ◆ This summer, due to COVID-19, the Boy Scouts of America could not meet for their annual summer camp at Goshen in Rockbridge County. However, they still wanted to provide the opportunity for scouts to work towards earning merit badges. Walker Wolff, our newly hired area forester for the Mountain Valley Area, worked with camp leaders to help scouts earn their Forestry Merit Badge. He taught three different classes of 25 students about what professional foresters do and informed them of the important issues we face today. Topics discussed included fire, harvesting, wildlife habitat improvement, forest health and what you need to learn to be a forester. Using a combination of PowerPoint and some short YouTube videos Walker was able to instruct students about forestry and answer the questions they posed.



## Public Information

- ◆ The following note comes from a fifth grade Virginia Beach teacher who took the first virtual PLT workshop for professional development (PD). Jody Ullmann, mentioned in the note, is a PLT facilitator.
  - "I also want you to know that I think your PLT course is the best PD of all this year. You and Jody provided structured, well-organized meetings, the course materials are top-notch, and you have been so available for questions, etc. (I have participated in many PDs due the COVID-19 situation.)"
- ◆ On Monday, August 10 Hanover County Public Schools started a Jumpstart program at all four of their middle schools. The schools are using the PLT GreenSchools investigations in a blended approach so the students become more adept at learning both virtually and at school. Page Hutchinson (PLT coordinator) held a video conferencing call for the 80 students and teachers participating in Jumpstart to introduce Action Projects which will be done upon the completion of the investigations. Page will continue to act as a coach to the teachers and students through Jumpstart and the school year. Other natural resource personnel and volunteers have also been trained and will act as coaches. There's great excitement about this model program.
- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) had an initial conversation with Virginia Department of Health Director of Environmental Health Julie Henderson to discuss the data layers her team creates that may be useful for VDOF messaging, as well as future partnership for Healthy Trees Healthy Lives.
- ◆ Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) assisted Ed Zimmer create a virtual award speech for the Virginia Forestry Association's Forestry Summit. The speech introduces this year's Tree Farm award winners.
- ◆ Fred Turck was featured last week on Smokey Bear's Twitter feed: @smokey\_bear
  - My friend, Fred Turck, from the Virginia Department of Forestry, shared this very special image and message with me!  
"Pictured is a portion of my collection (approx. 1/3) and the bear I am holding was my very first Smokey item, received when I was a young boy." (pictured)



## News Clips

- ◆ [Despite company claims, only a fraction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline is complete in Virginia](#)
- ◆ [Cross-laminated Timber \(CLT\) Made from Hardwood is Gaining Traction](#)
- ◆ [How to Bend Wood](#)
- ◆ [Sorrells: Ask legislators to prioritize outdoor space](#)